

# James Monroe - The Monroe Doctrine

By Jane Runyon

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James Monroe was a Virginia gentleman. He was born into a wealthy family in 1758. He had all the advantages a young man could have in those days. He attended college at William and Mary in Williamsburg. One of his classmates and a good friend was Thomas Jefferson. He was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. After the war, he was anxious to practice law in Fredricksburg, Virginia.

Monroe sided with Jefferson in his choice of governments for the new country. A group who called themselves Federalists believed that an extremely strong central government was called for. They did not trust the common man to make decisions for all citizens. Jefferson and Monroe believed that the powers of the government should be spread out among all the people. This group was given the name Democratic-Republicans or just Republicans, for short. Monroe voted to ratify the Constitution while a member of the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

In 1790, Monroe was elected as a United States senator from Virginia. From 1794 to 1796 Monroe and his wife, Elizabeth, lived in France. He had been appointed as a minister to France. Monroe had a deep interest in the French and their attempt to develop their own independence. His friendship with the French government became quite helpful later. He was instrumental in working out a deal with the French to buy land which would become known as the Louisiana Purchase.

Monroe was a kind and well-liked government official. These qualities made it quite easy for his Republican party to nominate him for president in 1816. He won. He won re-election in 1820. Two events marked the Monroe presidency in history. In 1819, Missouri applied for statehood. They asked to be admitted as a state which allowed slavery. Monroe and his government were concerned about allowing too many slave states into the Union. Two years later, Monroe was able to work out a compromise which would allow Missouri to become a state. In this agreement, Maine would also be admitted, but it would be designated a slave free state. A bill named the Missouri Compromise made it mandatory that a slave state be paired with a free state to be admitted.

The second memorable decision to come from Monroe's term was the Monroe Doctrine. Spain still held land in North, South, and Central America. Their finances and military power were weakening. The United States was able to purchase Florida from the Spanish at this time for about \$5 million. Other Spanish holdings in Central and South America did not really interest the American government. The same cannot be said for some European countries, such as Russia. Colonizing areas in this new world seemed like a good way for these European countries to gain power and wealth for themselves. James Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams decided that something needed to be done. In December of 1823, Monroe gave a speech to Congress which was to set rules that the United States government still uses today. The purpose of his speech was to set some boundaries. The United States would keep their hands off any land in Europe, and European countries were to keep their hands off land in the Americas. It wasn't until the early 1850's that this rule officially became known as the Monroe Doctrine. By this time, Monroe had been dead for twenty years. He died on July 4, 1831, five years to the day his good friend and colleague Thomas Jefferson died.



Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

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### Questions

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\_\_\_\_\_ 1. James Monroe struggled in life to become a lawyer and politician.

- A. True
- B. False

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. What state did James Monroe represent?

- A. Massachusetts
- B. France
- C. Virginia
- D. United States

3. What type of government did James Monroe believe the United States should have?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 4. In what country did Monroe serve as minister?

- A. Virginia
- B. Russia
- C. France
- D. United States

5. Why do you think Monroe opposed the admittance of Missouri to the Union?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 6. What political party did Monroe join?

- A. Whigs
- B. Federalists
- C. Democratic-Republicans
- D. Independent

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Monroe served two terms as President of the United States.

- A. True
- B. False

8. What do you believe Monroe meant when he told European nations to keep their hands off land in Central and South America?

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

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